



# How to Participate in a Chat-Based Activity

## Overview

Participating in a chat-based activity can be great fun, but it can also be extremely frustrating. This document will help explain how to participate in a BRIDGE Chat-Based Activity in two ways:

1. Using the chat system
2. Using special features
3. Interacting in a BRIDGE chat activity

## Using the Chat System

Below is a screen shot of the chat system we use in the BRIDGE. Underneath the image, we'll explain further the different areas of the chat system and what they do.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "The BRIDGE" with the URL [http://www.teachersbridge.org/index.php?page=community\\_activities\\_main\\_SYNC\\_popUp&activityId=1308](http://www.teachersbridge.org/index.php?page=community_activities_main_SYNC_popUp&activityId=1308). The chat interface is titled "123 FLASH CHAT" and shows a list of users: "All Users" and "jmoore". The chat history displays messages from "amysan" and "jmoore". On the right, a "Test of Best Ever" chat window shows "2 users" and "All Users". The chat input area at the bottom includes a text box, a "Send" button, and a "Newline" button. A warning message at the bottom states: "Warning : This chat server records a log of all conversations and will display the last 100 lines of chat upon entry. Conversations here are not private." The footer includes links for "Friends of the BRIDGE", "Privacy Policy", "bridgeqa@uga.edu", and "©2004 The University of Georgia".

1. Main Window

2. Options

3. Chat Box

4. User List

## 1. Main Window

The Main Window is where the chat conversation takes place. You can scroll back to review the last 100 lines.

## 2. Chat Box

The Chat Box is where you enter your comments. Just type (or copy and paste) into the box and either click the Send button or press Enter on your keyboard. A couple of things to know about entering text:

- There is a character limit, so don't type or copy and paste more than 2-3 lines at a time or it won't all show up in the main window
- If you copy and paste anything into the box, it will sometimes have weird character wrapping. We know about the issue but don't really know how to fix it.

## 3. Options

You have several options to choose from including changing your text color and style, changing your avatar, modifying the background of your Main Window and sending emoticons and animations to the Main Window. We encourage you to play around with these settings as much as you like and have fun. However, when the session starts, we strongly encourage participants to use plain black text (no bold) and the presenter and facilitator to use a bold color, that way their comments are more easily recognizable.

## 4. User List

This is a list of the current users in the chat room. You can tell if a group member is typing when "(typing)" appears by their username.

---

## Using Special Features

---

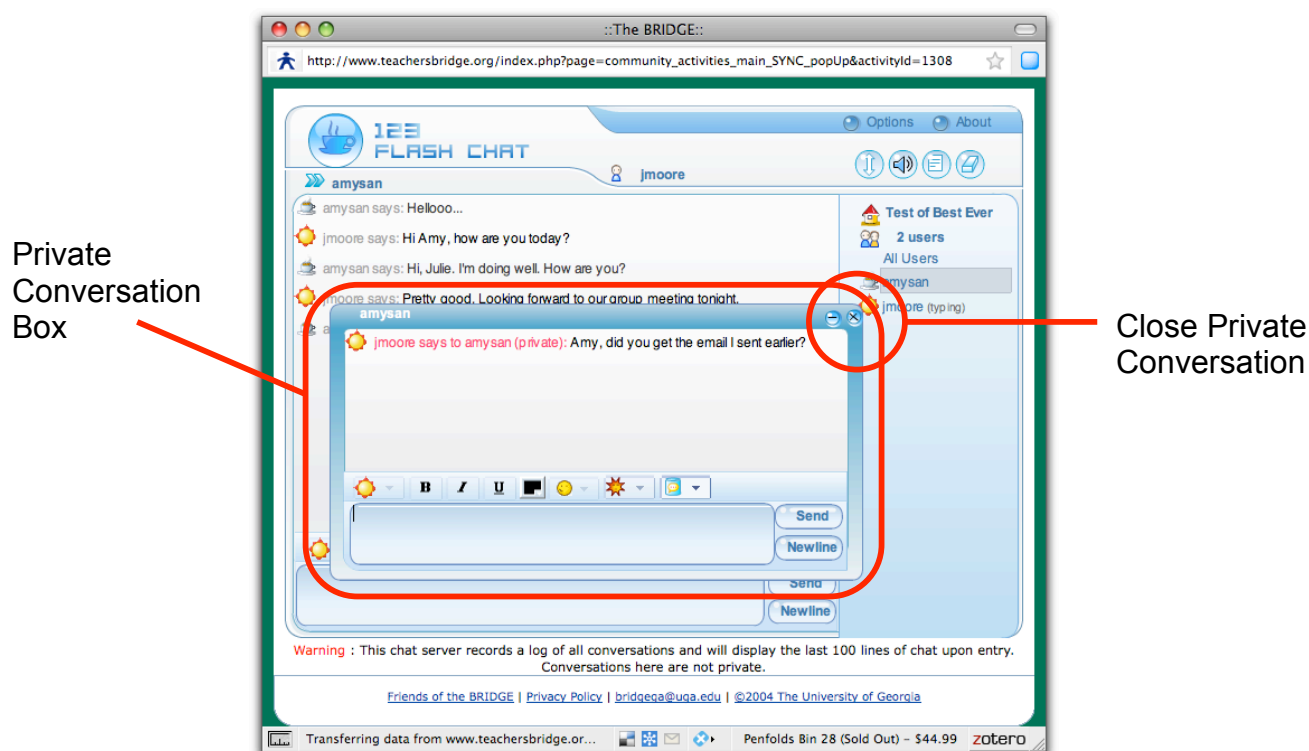
There are a couple of special features that you may wish to use during a BRIDGE Chat session:

### 1. Sending a private message

To send a private message to another user, click once on their username, type in your Chat Box and send. The message will appear in the Main Window, but with a prefix *yourusername says to theirusername*. This means that no one else can see the message. To return to normal chat mode (your message is seen by all), click on **All Users** at the top of the User List

### 2. Having a private conversation

Having a private conversation is similar to sending a private message, but instead of your comments appearing in the Main Window, a smaller chat box is opened just between you and your conversation partner.



To start a private conversation, double-click (as opposed to single-click) on the username and the Private Conversation Box will pop up. To close, click on the **X** in the upper right hand corner of the Private Conversation Box.

Note: You will not be able to resize the Private Conversation Box or move it beyond the boundaries of the larger window.

## Interacting in a BRIDGE Chat Activity

Using chat for a discussion can be chaotic and very disjointed. We suggest the group use the following norms/conventions to help the activity flow smoothly:

- **Keep phrases short** and **string several together several phrases with "..."** at the end of incomplete ideas instead of typing huge text blocks. This keeps the conversation flowing and avoids group members wondering if the system has crashed.
- Just as you use "... to indicate that you have more coming, **use "///" to indicate that you are finished** with your thought.
- **In Q&A sessions, type "?" to raise your hand.** You can still type your question or comment in your chat box, but wait until the facilitator calls on you to press Send. This is particularly helpful during clarifying and probing questions, so the presenter can respond directly to the question posted without having 2-3 new ones pop up while they are typing. It is also a good strategy to use for regular discussion if the group is unaccustomed to keeping up with chat conversations.

- **Let go of being perfect.** Chat is a difficult enough format without having to feel that everything you type has to be typo-free and grammatically correct. Spending several minutes crafting the perfect paragraph will only make others wonder if you are still logged on and the conversation is likely to have passed your point by. Allow yourself the freedom to express your thoughts without having to be perfect. Be okay with typos, misspellings, and grammatical errors – just for the chat session.

## Questions?

---

Contact your community leader or the BRIDGE team ([bridgega@uga.edu](mailto:bridgega@uga.edu)) for assistance. Have fun and thanks for making the BRIDGE a powerful resource for your group!